The Hunter and the Hunted

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In which Kan'u turns the tables on Chou'un, and the line is blurred between the hunter and the hunted. Not a lemon, but somewhere in the citrus aisle nonetheless.

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Introduction
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AUTHOR'S NOTE ONE: *Koihime Musou* does not belong to me. Et cetera. This story is set after the finale of *Otome Tairan* (but before the post-credits stinger scene), and may also be considered to take place after the events of *South Side of the Sky* and *What All the Fuss is About* . (And *Yamihime*, for that matter, because I'm a masochist who loves trying to tie everything together into a single continuity.)

AUTHOR'S NOTE TWO: Slightly revised on 14 October 2011. Felt like I could make a certain point better than I did originally. I do that sometimes.

OBLIGATORY AUTHOR'S NOTE ABOUT NAMING CONVENTIONS: Kan'u Unchou = Aisha, Chou'un Shiryuu = Sei, Chouhi Yokutoku = Rin Rin, Ryuubi Gentoku = Touka.

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Kan'u Unchou was feeling distracted, to say the least.

The celebration of Ukitsu's defeat was well into its fourth hour by this time. There had been feasting, drinking, singing, and endless good company, of which Kan'u had partaken heartily, some of them perhaps more than others. This was not to say that she was drunk, as such, but *something* had certainly given her the courage to stand on the makeshift stage and sing beside the Chou sisters.

Even outside the impromptu performance, she had felt very much the center of attention (or at least one of them) all day, constantly answering questions about the battle, demurring starry-eyed

compliments from her growing crowd of admirers, and fielding discussions of alliances both military and… well, *otherwise*, at least in Sousou's case. None of this, however, was the source of her ongoing distraction.

No, that would be Chou'un.

It was early on that Kan'u had noticed Chou'un watching her. She was neither too close nor particularly keeping her distance, but at the same time, she was always in sight, and always watching. When Kan'u had been dealing with the embarrassment of Chouryou trying to feed her, Chou'un had been watching. When Kan'u and Shuutai had been marveling at the incongruously cute native dance of the Namban barbarians, Chou'un had been watching. When Kan'u had been singing along with the Chou sisters, Chou'un had been watching.

And not just watching. Watching with *intent* .

Kan'u was being hunted: she was sure of it. Every time she met Chou'un's violet eyes, she felt it.

Their brief time as lovers had, by necessity, come to a close (or at least an indefinite pause) after Chouhi and Ryuubi had returned from Namban, and Kan'u had once again found herself with a happy little sister attached to her every night. Soon after, they were leading their army, marching against the forces of the deposed Toutaku, leading immediately into the conflict with the sorcerer Ukitsu, and… there simply had not been the time, or the chance, to give thought to resuming those distressingly pleasant intimate activities.

Activities in which, Kan'u noted to herself, Chou'un had *always* been the hunter. Always the one in control. Always the one giving the pleasure, and preventing Kan'u from attempting to do the same ("Plenty of time for that after your education," Chou'un would smirk).

And now Chou'un was watching her with that same glint in her eyes: the *I will have you* look that both thrilled and exasperated Kan'u to no

end. As much as she had enjoyed these romps with Chou'un, and as much as she'd been looking forward to their continuation, Kan'u was growing annoyed at being the hunted all the time. After all, she was the black-haired bandit *hunter* (it was right there in her title!), not some hapless damsel!

Mindful of this, Kan'u excused herself from the company of Sonsaku and Shuuyu (who were snuggling more than speaking to her anyhow) and went for a walk amidst the tents and wagons of the makeshift army's camp outside the palace. She soon found herself alone, with the sounds of the celebration growing more distant, and as expected, this was where Chou'un made her move.

Only this time, Kan'u was ready for her. Chou'un, ever a master of the silent ambush, nonetheless found herself grappled and firmly pressed against the Chou sisters' travel wagon: Kan'u held both of the other woman's wrists over her head, pinned under her left hand, while her right held a firm grip on Chou'un's hip to keep her from squirming away. It was here that Kan'u noticed that Chou'un had divested herself of the collar and heavy sleeves of her kimono, leaving her neck, shoulders and arms bare: to improve her stealth, no doubt. Not that it had done her any good.

To Kan'u's great satisfaction, she was able to watch as Chou'un's face, mere inches from her own, went from its normal smirk to a look of genuine shock, which was just as quickly masked. "A-Aisha," Chou'un said quietly, unable to fully hide the slight tremor in her voice. "Were you expecting an assassin, perhaps, at a celebration of peace?"

"Not at all, Sei," Kan'u grinned, pressing herself more firmly against her oft-time hunter. "I was expecting *you* ."

"I see," Chou'un smiled hesitantly. "Forgive me, Aisha, but I can't think of what I might have done to deserve such a welcome as this?"

"You've been watching me."

"True…"

"With *intent* ."

"… Also true…"

"Did you perhaps think that with the war over, you could catch me unawares and have your way with me again?" Kan'u smiled wickedly as she pressed still closer.

"The thought had crossed my mind," Chou'un nodded. "I… hoped that you might agree?"

"Very much so," Kan'u whispered, nose to nose with her fellow warrior. "But… why not on *my* terms, for once?"

Chou'un's mask of forced nonchalance, which she had barely been holding anyway, finally shattered, and her face began to flush. "Aisha," she quavered.

"Hmm?"

"Your… your knee…"

Kan'u glanced down to see that her left leg was planted firmly between Chou'un's, with her thigh pressing against the other woman in a most… *delicate* fashion. "Is there anything wrong with my knee?" she asked innocently, bringing the leg up just slightly. She was rewarded by the sound of Chou'un inhaling through clenched teeth and letting out a tiny whimper.

"So what do you think, Chou'un-sensei?" Kan'u chuckled, moving her right hand up from Chou'un's hip to grasp the top fringe of her kimono, then slowly pulling it down. "Have I been doing well with my… education?" On this last word, she cupped Chou'un's bared breast and gave it a gentle squeeze.

Chou'un bit her lower lip so hard it looked like she might draw blood, then let out a strangled moan and all but collapsed against Kan'u,

her breath coming in ragged gasps as she shook with one tremor after another. Kan'u froze, instinctively holding the other woman tightly against her. Her first incongruous thought was that Chou'un was hurt, and for an instant she wondered if there might be an assassin nearby after all. But gradually, the shaking subsided, and realization dawned. "Sei?"

"Mmm?" Chou'un managed in reply, her voice high-pitched and thready.

"Was that..? Did you just..?"

With an expressive sigh, Chou'un pushed herself to lean back against the wagon and gave Kan'u a look that was part humor and part embarrassment. "Aisha, if you don't know what *that* was, my education of you has been a failure after all."

"But…" Kan'u started, shaking her head with confusion. "But you… Sei, is that all it took?"

"I'm afraid so," Chou'un sighed, her expression shifting further toward embarrassed.

"It is… *always* that easy for you?"

Chou'un closed her eyes and gave a smile that was more like her normal self. "As much as I'd like to say no, that it was only because it was you, Aisha… I'm afraid it *is* always that easy for me."

"I don't understand," Kan'u said, shaking her head bemusedly.

"And I'll explain," Chou'un promised, "but first I need to sit down before my legs collapse."

Kan'u released her captive, and they settled to the soft grass together. Kan'u held Chou'un while her blue-haired companion leaned bonelessly against her, still breathing deeply. "So… tell me?"

Chou'un let out a long sigh. "I'm one of those rare women cursed to be quick to bring to ecstasy. A grope here, a whispered word there, and I'm done for."

"How exactly is this a *curse*, Sei?" Kan'u laughed. "It seems to me like it would be a blessing!"

"Yes, yes," the other warrior chuckled. "There's an old joke, you know, where one woman says to the other 'I have a rare condition - I climax every time I sneeze.' The second woman says 'My goodness, are you taking any herbs for that?' To which the first woman says 'Yes, dried pepper.'"

Kan'u giggled at this. "Indeed."

"And I *have* attempted to use herbs, as it happens," Chou'un nodded. "But no matter what I've tried - herbs, meditation, yoga - none of it has given me any more… endurance than that, I'm afraid."

"Why try so hard to fight it?" Kan'u asked, briefly considering whether or not she wanted to know what yoga was. She thought back on the few moments of physical ecstasy she'd had in Chou'un's company, and wondered how anyone could want *less* of that.

Chou'un settled further, so that her head was in Kan'u's lap, and she looked up, giving her companion a wistful smile. "Because, darling Aisha… it seems to me that… sometimes it would be nice to enjoy the journey a little more."

Even as Chou'un said this, her face open and honest, her guard completely down, Kan'u suddenly understood. "This is why you always want to be the attacker, isn't it? Because you have no defense?"

"That's one way of putting it," Chou'un said, closing her eyes. "Not the most charitable way, perhaps, but it's technically accurate."

The somewhat pained look on Chou'un's face made Kan'u's heart sink, and she suddenly found her mind filled with further memories of their handful of nights together. She vividly remembered those (truly glorious) moments of release, of course, but there was so much more to it than that: there was the delightful anticipation, the building heat, the touch of fingers that felt like lightning and lips and a tongue that proved themselves adept with much more than clever words… It was indeed an enjoyable journey leading up to that final leap.

And it was a journey that Chou'un would never experience. A journey that she nonetheless took great pains in allowing Kan'u to enjoy to the fullest. Kan'u thought back on the way Chou'un had continuously deflected any of Kan'u's attempts to reciprocate in their lovemaking. It hadn't seemed fair, upon reflection, but now it made a certain kind of sense. Was she simply embarrassed about her unusual condition? Or… was it truly enough for her to be the bringer of pleasure rather than its recipient? "I'm… I'm sorry, Sei. Is it… less enjoyable for you, since it's so easy?"

"I wouldn't say that," Chou'un mused, a hint of her normal smirk returning. "Today was my first time at your hands, Aisha, and that made it more *enjoyable* than you can know." Her face then darkened. "Still… I wish I could do better for you."

"Do better?" Kan'u snorted. When Chou'un frowned at this reaction, she shook her head and went on. "Oh, no, woe is me. A beautiful and incredibly skilled lover keeps insisting on making me the focus of her attention when we're in bed together. How *awful* for me!"

"Aisha…"

Kan'u awkwardly leaned down to kiss the protest from Chou'un's lips. "You're very silly, Sei," she whispered after they broke. "So focused on being my teacher. Maybe it's time for you to be my student as well?"

"In what way?" Chou'un asked, looking bemused.

"I may not know much yet," Kan'u grinned down at her, "but I'm a martial artist at heart, just like you. And that means practice, practice and more practice. Who knows? Perhaps with *enough* practice, we can do something about that stamina of yours?"

Chou'un's cheeks flushed again. "Practice, eh?"

"If the formidable Chou'un Shiryuu thinks she can learn anything from an amateur like myself, that is?" Kan'u teased.

They looked into each other's eyes for several seconds, then Chou'un let a slow smile cross her face. "In telling you what I have, I've given you great power over me, Aisha. Please use it wisely."

Kan'u smiled wickedly, finding it very pleasant to have some of that power for a change. "Oh, don't worry, I intend to." She reached down to straighten the front of her lover's kimono, and finding herself unable to resist, she once again gave her breast a gentle squeeze.

Chou'un let out another tiny whimper, then shuddered as Kan'u traced her fingers along her collarbone, then her throat, and finally glided over her chin. "You *will* let me return the favor before you do that to me again, I hope?" she asked quietly.

"It would be my pleasure."

"It will be if I have anything to say about it, yes."

Some time later, the two women lay naked in one another's arms, hidden away in the safety of the Chou sisters' carriage.

On reflection, Kan'u realized that something had changed since their first nights together: with her secret now in the open, Chou'un had a new sense of vulnerability to her, even in her return to her customary role as the aggressor. And as much fun as her newfound power was, Kan'u was happier still to realize that they were on a more even

footing now, each of them sharing more than simply their bodies or their mutual pleasure.

She knew that it was going to be interesting trying to explain all of this to her sisters, much less any of her other friends and allies, but that was a bridge to be crossed at another time. For that matter, there was some concern regarding how Sousou would react, but the young general of Wei already had a harem of her own to comfort her, and even the knowledge that Kan'u was in another woman's bed would probably not blunt her pursuit entirely.

For now, though, all of that could wait.

"So, Kan'u Unchou," Chou'un said at last, lifting her head from Kan'u's shoulder and smiling down at her. "You've led your army well, and the land is once more at peace. What next?"

"I'm not sure," Kan'u admitted. "Rin Rin wants to go home to see her village again, and Touka-ane-ue would like to come as well."

"Ah, a homecoming journey for the three sisters, eh?"

"Just a trip to where it all began. A chance to enjoy this time of peace while it lasts."

"An excellent idea," Chou'un agreed, once again lying against her lover's shoulder. "A chance for the sisters to strengthen their bonds outside of war. I've no doubt that you'll have a fine journey together, the three of you."

"I'm sure they'd both be happy to have you travel with us," Kan'u said, remembering the Chou'un who had once sworn to follow her into Hell itself.

"No, Aisha," Chou'un said quietly. "Even I can recognize the significance of such a personal quest as this. I can wait for your return."

"And I *will* return. Never doubt that."

"I won't. And meanwhile, even though I will not be at your side, I'm sure that you will be… watched over carefully on your journey. As capable as you and Rin Rin are, I have a feeling that someone else will be there in the shadows, helping to ensure your safety."

"Hmm, someone in a mask, perhaps?" Kan'u chuckled.

"Perhaps," Chou'un agreed. "She *is* the guardian of justice *and beauty*, after all. It would be a shame to leave yours undefended."

"A shame indeed."

The End